

Gathering Kindling in a wooded Landscape

Thomas Gainsborough, R.A.



Description

Thomas Gainsborough R.A. (1727-1788)
Gathering kindling in a wooded landscape

Pencil and stump with touches of wash on laid paper with fragmentary watermark Vryheit of a rampant lion on a pedestal
18.4 by 14.4 cm., 7 ¼ by 5 in.

This drawing is part of a group of drawings dating from the late 1740s or early 1750s, when the artist had returned to his native Suffolk from London and before his move to Bath at the end of the decade. All the drawings from this group are on similar sized small sheets and depict groups of rural figures, sometimes engaged in gathering wood or digging, or alternatively just talking or resting in the landscape. The combination of figures in a wooded landscape, with a winding path disappearing into the distance was inspired by 17th Century Dutch landscapes. In the present drawing, the pollarded tree on the far right, as well as a somewhat decrepit bit of fencing, hints at the cultivated, agricultural nature of the subject and suggests that this drawing was from life, rather than being drawn from his imagination.

Amongst the group are, A Wooded Landscape with Group of Figures (Morgan Library and Museum, New York, III, 52) and Wooded Landscape with Figures (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 1957-0009-292) which employ similar group of figures, dwarfed by their surroundings and creating a strongly diagonal line within the composition, with some figures standing, whilst others are seated. The sense of diagonal in these early drawings is further emphasised by the angle of the cross hatching to create shadow and depth to the drawings. The present drawing is unique in this group in the application of wash, as well as pencil.

The subject of gathering faggots, or bundles of kindling, appears repeatedly throughout Gainsborough's career. Another early drawing on a similarly sized sheet, depicting a man carrying a bundle of faggots, was sold by Christie's 20 November 2003, lot 4. Later, in the 1780s, such subjects became popular for his larger scale, fancy paintings such as The Cottage Children (The Wood Gatherers) (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 50.145.17) and his late large drawings, such as The Woodman Seated on a Bundle of Faggots (Art Institute of Chicago 1993.175).

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